

DEC 19 1953

NEW TIMES

FOREIGN PRESS REVIEW

## The Anglo-American Atom Bomb Controversy

CPYRGHT

V. LVOV

ON the eve of the separate three-Power talks in Bermuda there were hints in the foreign press that Britain would avail herself of the opportunity to secure American agreement for an "exchange of atomic information." The press made much of the fact that Churchill was taking along his atomic adviser, Lord Cherwell.

This British hope, like many another before it, failed to materialize. Press reports indicate that no agreement was reached on "exchange of atomic information," and Anglo-American atomic rivalry seems to be more acute than ever.

For some time now technical journals in Britain and America have been debating the question of who really designed the American atom bomb. The controversy might seem illogical, for, surely, the *American* atomic bomb could only have been designed by *Americans*.

But formal logic is not always applicable to political controversies, and the British claim to co-authorship of the American atomic bomb is not without foundation.

That was recently brought home to American scientists by Sir George Thomson, Britain's leading physicist who during World War II was the contact between atomic researchers in Britain and America. Dr. Thomson is thus in a position to know more than most people about the real background history of the American bomb. He revealed some details of that history in an article contributed earlier this year to the *American Scientist* and his revelations came as an "atomic explosion," setting off a "chain reaction" which is still having repercussions on both sides of the Atlantic.

Among other things, Dr. Thomson recalls that in July 1940, R. H. Fowler, a British researcher, acting on the instructions of his government, went to America and delivered to the U.S. authorities an envelope containing *all* the data accumulated by French and British experts working in British uranium laboratories. Another dossier was delivered to the United States in September 1941. It contained, Dr. Thomson tells us, estimates on the size of the uranium atom bomb and data for a unit to produce another type of atomic explosive, plutonium. This data was carried to America by Thomson himself, and handed to Vannevar Bush and James B. Conant, the future "brains trust" of America's atomic business. A month later, two Americans went to Britain, to return with detailed plans for a plant to manufacture U-235 by gaseous diffusion.

"The method of gaseous diffusion," Dr. Thomson writes, "has proved the most successful.... In June 1942, it was decided that, since Britain's resources were fully extended on the war effort, no large-scale plant for the production of atomic bombs should be built there. The United States' effort then started in earnest, *but it was unfortunately accompanied by an unwillingness to cooperate with Britain.*"

The Moor had done his duty, the Moor could go: having taken advantage of British consultation and assistance, having copied British blueprints—having, in other words, squeezed the lemon dry—Messrs Bush, Conant and their superiors decided they could throw away the rind. British researchers who wanted to work in laboratories they had themselves

designed and in atom plants built according to their plans, found all the doors shut. And this, Dr. Thomson relates, "lasted until the Quebec conference in August 1943."

That atomic weapons figured prominently in the Roosevelt-Churchill talks at Quebec is now known from the recently published "Private Papers" of the late Senator Vandenberg. Churchill and Roosevelt, Vandenberg recorded, concluded a secret agreement to exchange scientific information, cooperate on atomic questions and to consult with each other before employing the atomic weapon against any third country.

That was in 1943, and less than three years later the U.S. Congress scrapped this agreement, which bore the signature of the President of the United States. The McMahon atomic energy act of 1946 contained a special clause forbidding the transfer of atomic materials and information to any foreign power, Britain not excluded. The ban was reaffirmed and strengthened in 1951 by a special amendment adopted on the insistence of Vandenberg and his friends. It was this policy that prompted Mr. Skinner, one of the directors of the British atomic industry, to remark in the July 1953 issue of *Atomic Scientists News* that

"our projects have presumably been held up by the lack of a few kilograms of U-235 for general experimental work."

The British have never managed to obtain those few kilograms from their American "friends."

Another London scientific journal, *Discovery* (March 1953), relates an instance of the British asking their American "friends" for some innocent technical details on the development of plutonium installations (which, be it remembered, America had mastered with British assistance). Dr. Smith was sent "to discuss this matter" with the British, only to be handed a cable, on landing, with instructions from the U.S. Defence Department to return home immediately.

\* \* \*

No doubt it was felt in some British quarters that the establishment of a British atomic industry would solve the whole problem of

equality and cooperation with the U.S.A. That belief has been shared by British technical publications and scientists. *Discovery* wrote shortly after the first British atom bomb test at Monte Bello, in October 1952:

"Many commentators on both sides of the Atlantic have expressed the view that the success of the test [of the British atom bomb] will persuade America to revive Anglo-American cooperation in matters of atomic weapon development.... But a change in American law will be needed before information connected with atomic weapons can be exchanged."

The Americans, no doubt, assumed that British scientists might have made some new atomic discoveries, but preferred to obtain their information direct, and with a minimum of cost and bother. Two B-29 bombers, with U.S. intelligence officers and all the necessary equipment on board, the *Times of Indonesia* reported at the time, invaded the Monte Bello test area, gathered samples of radio-active dust, and returned to their bases....

London also entertained certain hopes that, with Eisenhower in the White House, there would be a better chance for exchanging atomic secrets. The London *Times* said editorially in January of this year:

"It is to be hoped that cooperation in dealing with atomic weapons will be among the subjects discussed when Mr. Churchill and General Eisenhower meet."

The British press especially stressed that the Chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, Gordon Dean, definitely favoured revision of the McMahon Act.

Washington's reply to all these hopes was swift and conclusive: Dean was dismissed and replaced by Lewis L. Strauss, a New York banker who has not betrayed the slightest inclination to share atomic secrets. In fact, some three years ago, when a Norwegian hospital applied to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission for permission to purchase a microscopic dose of radio-active isotopes for medical purposes, Strauss was the only one to vote against granting a permit. The American press describes him as "the right man in the right place," but that, of course, has not improved the prospect for Anglo-American atomic cooperation.

The British, who look askance at American policies generally, are very much incensed by American reluctance to share atomic secrets, especially since the British Isles are being converted into an American atomic aircraft carrier.

Knowing of this feeling of indignation, British official circles have tried to make the best of an unhappy situation. When, on July 31, Labour M. P. Alfred Robens asked the Minister of Supply, Duncan Sandys, if the United States had refused to exchange atomic information with Britain, the reply was:

"There can be no doubt of our readiness to exchange information. . . . We have more and more to offer."

Sandys was referring to the second British atomic bomb test this fall at the Woomera area in South Australia.

Should the American government wish to send observers to this test, he said, suitable arrangements for reciprocal facilities could be made.

This optimism got its first blow on the eve of the test when, on September 12, the *Economist* Washington correspondent remarked that "the question of sharing information on atomic weapons" was still a "difficult" one.

The test itself, on October 14, brought another blow. There were no official American observers. And, indeed, what was the sense in their wasting valuable time wandering over Australian desert, when the necessary information could be procured by Mr. Allen Dulles and his ubiquitous agents? Besides, there was

the American Embassy at Canberra, which the *Sydney Tribune* described as the headquarters of a far-flung American spy ring in Australia. In January of this year, American observers in Australia were assigned one more duty: supervision of the development of Australian uranium deposits, which the Canberra government had turned over to the American Zinc Corporation. Incidentally, South African uranium, and uranium and thorium deposits in every other part of the British Empire, are also gradually coming under American monopoly control.

Messrs Allen Dulles and Strauss have still another very effective instrument for ferreting out information on British atomic development: the ECNR—the European Council for Nuclear Research, also known as the European atom trust or pool, with headquarters in Paris and Geneva. It was founded in 1950-52 on the initiative of Rabi, the American atomist, and in accordance with plans elaborated by the State Department's "scientific branch." The purpose of the pool is to "coordinate" atomic research in twelve European countries, of which Great Britain is one.

The Anglo-American controversy over the atom bomb is only one of the many differences between the two chief NATO partners. Washington relies heavily on the atomic weapon as a policy instrument. The American imperialists, now that they have lost their monopoly of the atomic weapon, are all the more anxious to retain any advantages they have over their British ally. This is part of Anglo-American "friendship."

CPYRGHT

## INTERNATIONAL NOTES

CPYRGHT

### WORLD SOLIDARITY WITH VIET-NAM

"Stop the 'dirty war' in Viet-Nam!" This is the demand raised by working people in all countries today, December 19, as they observe International Day of Active Solidarity with the Viet-Nam People, instituted by the Third World Congress of Trade Unions. The demand is now being voiced more vigorously than ever, following the new peace moves by the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. As President Ho Chi Minh stated in a recent interview with the Swedish *Expressen*, if the French government

"desires to proclaim an armistice and to settle the Indo-China question by negotiation, the government and the people of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam are prepared to discuss the French proposal."

The imperialist circles that seek to aggravate international tension are resorting to all kinds of manoeuvres to prevent a peaceful settlement of the Indo-China question. To mislead public opinion they are claiming that Ho Chi Minh's statement was prompted by the "military weakness" of the Viet-Nam Democratic Republic, and they describe his statement as a trick necessitated by "the success of the offensive conducted under the Navarre plan."

But the facts indicate the reverse. The widely publicized Operation Gull launched in the second half of October "under the Navarre plan" was a complete flop: in twenty days the French lost nearly 4,000 men and officers without making any headway. Lately the People's Army of Viet-Nam has been continuing to develop successful operations. On December 11, after a vigorous offensive, it freed Laichau, administrative centre of one of the northern provinces, and carried out a number

of simultaneous operations in the south, in the Long-xuyen sector, 95 miles west of Saigon. In these operations the French forces suffered what a France Presse dispatch described as "heavy casualties."

All this shows that the claims made by the American press and Bao Dai's men are utterly false and groundless. The peace move of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam is not, of course, a sign of "weakness," it is dictated by the natural and humane desire to end the senseless bloodshed.

The war in Indo-China is harmful not only to the peoples of Viet-Nam but to the vital interests of France, and broad sections of the French nation are coming out resolutely in favour of peace talks. In a recent communiqué the Bureau of the General Confederation of Labour, which has 3,300,000 members, stated:

"To put an end to the war in Viet-Nam is the desire of all our people, of the whole working class."

Many bourgeois public leaders too have also begun more frequently to urge negotiations to end the war in Indo-China. They realize that the war is weakening France's international position by making her dependent upon America's aggressive circles. The movement against the "dirty war" has now become so widespread in France that even the *Washington Post* is apprehensive that

"Premier Laniel may find the pressure irresistible from groups in France which are seeking every excuse to abandon the struggle in Indo-China."

As peace-loving mankind declares its active solidarity with the heroic people of Viet-Nam, it insistently demands that the war in Indo-China be terminated. This would undoubtedly contribute to a general lessening of international tension.